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# The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, *August* 13. 1695.

Queſt. 1. *WHether it is lawful for a Man whoſe circumſtances are very unhappy, and hinder him from marriage, to caſtrate himſelf that he may be delivered from the moſt urgent temptations; I have look'd on* Pool, *in his Criticks on that place (ſome have made themſelves* Eunuchs *for the Kingdom of Heaven) who denies it to be lawful, explains it Metaphorically, which to me ſeems a miſtake, the ſame word* Eunuch *in the immediately preceding ſentence being took Literally. And as for the objection that it may endanger life, it is but ſlight, for if it be done by a good Surgeon, the danger is little or none.*

*Anſw.* 'Tis not only the opinion of Mr. *Pool*, but in General of our beſt *Caſuiſts*, that that place is to be ſo taken as well as thoſe other places, which command the diſmembring our ſelves rather than tranſgreſſing our duty. We think that the moſt natural and beſt interpretation ſome late Divines have given of it, which is, that the firſt through the defect of Nature, the ſecond, by the command of their ſuperiours, are incapacitated to multiply their kind, and the laſt, through their own Determinations, it being the ſame in effect whether a Man is an *Eunuch*, or reſolves to deny himſelf the embraces of a woman; which amongſt the other enjoyments of this life ſome have wholly relinquiſht, that they might be the more diſengaged from the world, and the more abſolutely devote themſelves to piety. 'Tis very much to be doubted, whether Caſtration wou'd take away all ſuch unruly deſires, but if we were aſſur'd it wou'd, and that it were lawful upon ſuppoſition that it might be performed without danger of Life, yet tho done by the beſt Chirurgion, the event being uncertain it cannot be Lawful.

Queſt. 2. *One of my ſiſters (for whoſe welfare I am extreamly concerned) hath plentiful fortune in my hands, and I being unwilling to truſt it with any husband but one as ſhe may live happily with; and ſhe and I being at ſome difference about the man, I have prevailed upon her to be adviſed by you, upon the enſuing queſtion (admitting the fact to be true, which will be my province to evince to her) viz. Two Gentlemen offer themſelves, the one makes his addreſſes for intereſt ſake, having an eſtate unworthy her fortune, and incumbred; the other courts her out of a pure affection, abſtracted from any mean deſign of preying upon her portion, having an eſtate clear that well deſerves her; the firſt is ſkilled in the Art of Rhetorick and ſuch plauſible Gallantries, as moſtly engage the minds of the ſoft Sex; the laſt is honeſt, modeſt, downright and ſincere; they are both perſonable men: pray reſolve her which is the moſt proper object of her affection, or more fit to make her a husband, we are in ſome pain for your anſwer, and if it come not ſuddenly ſhe and I may be unhappy.*

*Anſw.* We very much doubt her being perſwaded by you, that the Character you give them is juſt, for cou'd ſhe believe that, there won'd be no need of our opinion, ſince no doubt the qualities of the Laſt is much to be preferred. Nor will it be improper for her to examine whether his honeſt, downright ſincerity mayn't deſerve the name of Churliſhneſs, and his mony only make him appear to you better than he really is, in which perhaps if the other equalled him, you'd think him the fitteſt for your brother. It being for your Sifters life if you love her as you pretend, you muſt conſider which will make the kindeſt and moſt obliging husband, as well as which will be the richeſt; Mony alone cannot make us happy, altho the miſtaken opinion ſome perſons have of it, has cauſed a great many unhappy Matches; tho where they can be had conveniencies are deſirable, and to be happy without 'em requires more Philoſophy than moſt perſons are capable of.

Queſt. 3. *I have been for ſome time in love with a young Lady, who receives my addreſſes with all that civility which uſually accompanies good breeding, without any mixture of inclination. She owns ſhe has a very great eſteem and value for me, that ſhe ſhou'd have a ſhare, and concern in any happineſs or misfortune that befell me, and that ſhe is very well pleas'd to hear me talk in any mixt company, and to other people, but whenever I ſpeak to her, ſhe ſays ſhe has ſo great an awe and damp upon her ſpirits ('Tis her own way of expreſſing it) that ſhe ſuffers all the confuſion and uneaſineſs in the world: this makes her lay hold of all opportunities to avoid me, which you may be ſure is to me the greateſt misfortune, and the moſt rigorous puniſhment ſhe can lay upon me, this is the caſe, and I think it very extraordinary, for 'tis the firſt time perhaps that any Conquerer ſtood in fear of his own ſlave. Gentlemen, we both deſire to know from what ſtrange cauſe this wonderful effect can proceed, ſhe ſays one thing and I another, but the matter is to be determined (if you pleaſe) by you.*

*Anſw.* Having no acquaintance with this Lady, we may not perhaps be ſo happy in our gueſſes, as if we had, ſince much depends upon the conſtitution and education of the perſon. We can only Judge according to the nature of things, by which it appears that ſhe has a very great value for you, and is unwilling to leſſen yours for her, having 'tis probable too humble an opinion of her ſelf, believing there is a great difference between the qualities of your minds. Or perhaps ſhe's affraid of diſcovering too much of her love in particular diſcourſes, having heard men are generally ungrateful after once they know they are loved again; we can find out no other cauſe, except ſhee's baſhful not having uſed her ſelf to much Converſation, and if it's any of theſe, a remedy is eaſily found.

Queſt. 4. *I am in league with a Lady, who was before ingaged to another unknown to me, for ſhe firſt ſhewed kindneſs to me, and in ſo a remarkable a manner, that it would have tempted any man to have done the like, the Lady being no way diſpiſeable in Perſon or Eſtate; the Gentleman hearing of it was much concerned, and it's verily thought, if he has not the Lady it will coſt him his life; I alſo am in love that I cannot part from her without runing the ſame hazard; I am reſolved never to part, unleſs it can be proved to be againſt the law of God. Now Gentlemen, I would deſire to know whether I may ſafely marry the Lady, having her conſent, without commiting a ſin againſt God, or a diſhonourable Act againſt the Gentleman, it being unknown to me that they were ingaged. Your anſwer is deſired with ſpeed, I being impatient till the doubt be reſolved.*

*Anſw.* You can neither Lawfully, nor Honeſtly, have any thing to do with her, until her obligations to the Gentleman are firſt cancelled. Which if he were of our mind, wou'd not be very difficultly accompliſhed, ſince the Love of a perſon who is inclined to be inconſtant is not worth the preſerving. You were no way to blame for loving before you ſaw any reaſons againſt it, but ſhou'd you ſtill purſue your paſſion, and your Miſtreſs under her former engagement, 'twou'd not only be ungenerous to the lover, but alſo very diſpleaſing to God Almighty, ſince by their mutual vows and promiſes, they have almoſt made it a marriage.

Queſt. 5. *I deſire you wou'd be pleas'd to anſwer the following queſtion, with all poſſible ſpeed for the ſatisfaction of one, whoſe caſe requires great compaſſion, and a ſpeedy Reſolution.*

*He contracted debts many years ſince, and was not of Ability to pay them till of late, and now is told by ſome, that*

*that by the length of time, he may avoid the payment of them.*

Qu. 3. *Whether his Repentance can be true and he on good grounds hope for salvation, if he die before he pay the said debts, or so much of them as he is able, (and his creditor will accept, whose condition now needs the same, much more then formerly.) Altho, by such payment he be disabled to support himself in his old age, so full and at so much ease as he hath done of Late.*

*Another person desires you will consult,* Mat. 12. v. 47. *And answer the following question thereupon.*

Qu. 1. *Whether after the Birth of our Lord, the Virgin* Mary, *had Children by her Espoused* Joseph, *and what their names were.*

*Answ.* No duty is more prest in holy writ than Justice, we are commanded to render unto every one his due, not to defraud any one, and what is required of thee, O Man, but to do Justice, love Mercy, &c. in this summary of Religion, Justice is lookt upon as necessary as any other of its parts. This being so plain a duty whilst any Man lives in the breach of it, he can never be said to repent of his sins, for true repentance supposes an absolute forsaking of them. This person ought to consider that what he keeps, he has no right to, that 'tis anothers, and that if the Law of Man cannot call him to an account for it, yet God Almighty requires him not to defraud his Neighbour on any account, but to give unto every one his own, and wholly cast himself on his providence. Altho the debtor must be willing to do this, yet on the other side the Creditor ought not be too severe, but if possible to be done without his own absolute ruine, to permit the debtor still to retain so much as may put him into a Capacity of supporting himself, and paying the whole debt with less inconveniency. Yet tho the Creditor won't do his duty, the debtor is not on that account dispensed with for his. And if a man who has but just enough to pay his debts ought to do it, much more in this case where it may be done without the depriving himself of the necessaries of life.

*Answ.* 'Tis generally agreed upon, that the blessed Virgin had no other Child but our Saviour, and that those mentioned in St. *Matthew*, were only Kinsmen; Which the *Roman Catholicks* and many *Protestants*, were not only well perswaded of, but also believe that both *Joseph* and *Mary* vowed perpetual virginity.

Quest. 6. *I desire your opinion in this following question, a Man having a decripit old father wholly incapacitated by age to maintain himself, by his bodily labour, and an only Son so disabled in the Wars, in the defence of his Country, as to be under the same incapacity, and this person whose father and son are under such Circumstances, not being able to maintain both, which of the two may he provide for and which neglect?*

*Answ.* As for the Son if he has lost any of his limbs, the Government has made such a provision for him, as will supply him necessaries, if only sick he may have help from the Hospitals. But the father has none of these advantages, and therefore must be Relieved by him. Yet supposing the son cou'd have no support but from him, and the father and son were both upon the same terms, he ought not to refuse his assistance to either, but rather to make an equal distribution, and his pious endeavours being known, wou'd undoubtedly induce good persons to supply the rest by their Charity.


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